

Glossary of Terms

The United Methodist Church (UMC) uses a lot of insider language and terminology. Here is a brief glossary of words and phrases you will see in the documents we provide and other resources.

Annual Conference - This is a geographic region that includes all United Methodist churches and ministries in that area. Members meet annually to approve business, set budgets, and promote ministry programs. Clergy is elected into conference membership by the Annual Conference. A bishop is appointed to a conference to preside over the annual conference.

Apportionment - A portion of local church offerings that churches contribute to their district and conference to support the annual conference and general church ministries.

Bishop - Bishops are Elders elected by lay and clergy delegates at the jurisdictional conference and consecrated to the office of Bishop. Bishops oversee an annual conference and lead The United Methodist Church. They are authorized to "*guard the faith, order, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline of the church*" and to "*lead all persons entrusted to their oversight in worship, in the celebration of the sacraments, and in their mission of witness and service in the world.*"

Book of Discipline (BOD) - The Book of Discipline is the book of rules and law for the UMC. It includes historical information, doctrinal standards, and policies that can only be changed by General Conference, which meets every four years. It is printed following each General Conference to reflect decisions made by the General Conference.

Charge Conference - A local church meeting that includes the elected leadership of a local church and the clergy. It meets at least once a year to review goals, elect new leaders, set clergy salaries, and recommend persons for candidacy. The District Superintendent fixes the date of charge conference and leads it. Only elected leadership votes at a charge conference.

Church Conference - A local church meeting where all church members vote on a matter presented to the local church. The BOD determines when a particular issue requires a church conference vote. All full, professing members of the church vote at a church conference.

Council of Bishops - The Council of Bishops is made up of all active and retired bishops of The United Methodist Church. According to the Book of Discipline, "The Church expects the Council of Bishops to speak to the Church and from the Church to the world and to give leadership in the quest for Christian unity and interreligious relationships."

District Superintendent (DS) - A DS is an Elder assigned by the Bishop to oversee and lead churches within a defined geographic area in an Annual Conference. They serve as extensions of the bishop's authority in all matters. There are 4 districts in the North Texas Conference.

Elected Leader Groups - These are the official elected leadership of Lake Highlands UMC (LHUMC) as nominated by our nominations committee and approved by our charge conference. These groups are Church Council Chair, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC), Trustees, Finance, Foundation Board, Lay Leadership Nominations Committee, Foundations Board, a Lay Member to annual conference, and a Lay Leader.

GCFA (The General Council on Finance and Administration) - The GCFA is an elected group of laity and clergy that essentially serves as a Finance Committee for the entire UMC, which is called General CFA. There is also a CFA at the annual conference level.

General Conference (GC) - This is the main governing body for the UMC. It meets every four years (except in extreme circumstances like Covid19). It is made up of clergy and lay delegates from each annual conference across the world. GC is the only body authorized to speak on behalf of The United Methodist Church and establish or make any changes to the Book of Discipline.

Global Methodist Church - The newly formed traditional Methodist denomination launched on May 1, 2022. It was originally designed as an alternative to the ps-UMC (ps is post-separation). Most anticipated that General Conference would be convened to allow for amicable separation for those who would leave the UMC. The GMC has a transitional Book of Doctrines and Disciplines. It will have its first convening conference in 2023 to formally vote on adopting its inaugural Book of Doctrines and Disciplines as a denomination. More information can be found on their website: <https://globalmethodist.org/>

Lay person - A full, professing member of a local church that is not an ordained or licensed clergy.

Judicial Council - The Supreme Court of the UMC. They are made of 9 members with a mix of clergy and lay people. General Conference elects members of the Judicial Council. They are the full and final authority on any matter presented to them regarding the meaning and application of any issue in the Book of Discipline. They do not enforce adherence; they only offer rulings. Bishops are responsible for administering and following the rulings of the Judicial Council.

Jurisdiction/Jurisdictional Conference (JC) - A group of annual conferences within a geographical region in the United States. In the United States, there are five jurisdictions (North Central, Northeast, South Central, Southeast, and Western). The JC meets every four years after General Conference and consists of lay and clergy delegates elected from each annual conference in the Jurisdiction. Bishops are elected from among the clergy at each JC. Lake Highlands UMC is part of the South Central Jurisdiction.

North Texas Conference (NTC) - The Annual Conference that Lake Highlands UMC is in. This includes churches in the northern portion of the state of Texas that spans from Dallas to Wichita Falls to Paris. Within the North Texas Conference, LHUMC is in the Metro District.

Polity - the rules and structures that define the formal organization of the church.

Post Separation United Methodist Church (ps-UMC) - This is an unofficial designation used by various groups to describe what the United Methodist Church will most likely look like after a period of separation. Though there is much debate about the particular theological trajectory of a ps-UMC, Bishop Jones of the Texas Annual Conference suggests that after the departure of many traditionalist churches and pastors of the ps-UMC, "it will become more progressive, the only questions are how far and how fast."

Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) - The progressive advocacy group within the UMC. From the RMN website, "Reconciling Ministries Network mobilizes, connects, and equips people across and beyond the United Methodist connection to work for the full and equitable participation of all LGBTQ+ people in the Church."

Trust Clause - A statement included in The Book of Discipline of the UMC declaring the property and assets of a local United Methodist Church "in trust" for the United Methodist denomination. This means that LHUMC does not own our property; we pay for it, maintain it and hold it "in trust" for the UMC.

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-is-the-united-methodist-trust-clause>

Unfunded Pension Liability - The unfunded pension liability is the difference between the amount an annual conference has in cash assets to fund the pension of clergy before 1982 and any additional specific obligations any annual conference makes to clergy. Since 1982, clergy pensions have been deposited and administered directly through Wespeth. If a local church leaves the UMC, they are asked to pay their share of this liability since they will no longer be contributing to the unfunded pension reserves of the North Texas Conference. Unfunded pension liability amounts are specific to each annual conference's situation and commitment to its clergy.

Wespeth - Wespeth is the organization that administers the Health and Pension benefits of the UMC for all clergy. They determine the unfunded pension liability for each annual conference.

Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA) - A traditionalist renewal group within the UMC. From their website, "The Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA) connects Spirit-filled, orthodox churches, clergy, and laity who hold to Wesleyan theology. It is an association of individuals and congregations who share a common understanding of our Wesleyan doctrine and a desire to become a vibrant, faithful, growing 21st-century church."

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral – The “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” is a way to understand our approach to answering questions about Christian belief and practice using four components. Scripture, Reason, Experience, and Tradition were described as John Wesley’s tests for theological reflection. Scripture is considered the primary source and standard for Christian doctrine. Theology is to find its source in Scripture while Tradition, Reason, and Experience were to act as a help in understanding.

**Document adapted from Kingwood UMC.*